

State Officials Make Good on Promise to Visit Buena

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BUENA BOROUGH - It was a long way for them to come, but two state officials from Trenton kept their promise to visit Buena Borough for some serious municipal-plan brainstorming.

When Mayor Joseph Baruffi met with representatives from the state's Office of Smart Growth on July 24, there was much discussion and work on paper. The borough had recently agreed to cooperate on a joint plan with the state to boost the area's development. But Baruffi was quick to tell Barry Ableman, one of the office's planners, that to really understand Buena's strengths and weaknesses, he should see them in person.

"They heard that, and took me up on that offer," Baruffi said.

Alan Miller, a brownfield expert, joined Ableman on the trip Thursday to meet Baruffi and the borough's planner, Matt Ecker. In three hours, the group managed a tour of the sites in Buena that are the source of the borough's hopes and headaches.

"We showed them where we've got development under way and where we haven't, where we've got sewerage and where we haven't, where we're environmentally restricted and where we're not," Baruffi said.

The meetings have all come about after Buena borough entered into a memorandum of understanding with the state's Department of Community Affairs, which oversees the Office of Smart Growth.

The agreement allows both the state and the borough to cooperate in the production of a long-term municipal plan for the area, which the state would then endorse. Buena is one of only a handful of municipalities to embark on this, and Baruffi said it is primarily so he and the state are on the same page. During and after the endorsement process, the borough would also be eligible for certain grants open only to approved areas.

A case in point is the clean-up needed at the brownfield site known as the Mazzoni property on South Boulevard in the borough's Landisville section.

That site, a former packaging plant and truck depot, has been contaminated, thanks to oil spillage there, Baruffi said.

In order to achieve the town's goal of transforming the site into a solar energy plant, Baruffi said money has to be spent to test the contamination and deal with whatever turns up.

He said Miller talked Thursday about grants that might fund that process.

The Mazzoni site is part of the Commerce Center, a redevelopment zone that was initially turned down by DCA but was reconsidered in light of the memorandum agreement.

Elsewhere in the borough, Baruffi said Ableman and Miller stressed the need to envision multi-purpose spaces including room for both homes and businesses.

The visit comes during step two of the nine-step process toward state endorsement. Baruffi said he is putting together a local committee to oversee the process, and hopes to present recommendations for those positions at the next Borough Council meeting on Sept. 10.